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ABSTRACT

A study compared attitudes of editors and educators concerning how undergraduate news-editorial programs should respond to newspaper industry change, in particular new technology and changing reader needs. A questionnaire was mailed to 352 editors (representing small, medium-sized, and large newspapers) and 186 professors at undergraduate degree-granting schools that hold membership in the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication. A total of 266 of the 538 questionnaires were returned, for an overall response rate of 49.4%. Results indicated that editors were more skeptical than educators toward the teaching of technological advancements to undergraduates. Both groups believed that writing readable, accurate copy is the most important skill that journalism educators should teach. Results also indicated that editors were more willing than educators to teach students to think of newspapers as products to be marketed to their audience. (Twelve tables of data are included; the survey instrument is attached. Contains 15 references.) (RS)

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WHAT EDITORS AND EDUCATORS SAY ABOUT NEWS-EDITORIAL EDUCATION:

Toward a curriculum that responds to change

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WHAT EDITORS AND EDUCATORS SAY
ABOUT NEWS-EDITORIAL EDUCATION:

Toward a curriculum that responds to change

(An abstract)

This study compared attitudes of editors and educators concerning how undergraduate news-editorial programs should respond to newspaper-industry change, in particular new technology and changing reader needs. A questionnaire was mailed to 352 editors and 186 professors. The study found editors more skeptical than educators toward the teaching of technological advancements to undergraduates. It also found editors more willing than educators to teach students to think of newspapers as products to be marketed to their audience.

Introduction

Right now, in hundreds of journalism schools, professors are training news-editorial students who will spend most of their professional lives in the 21st century.

When those students are handed their diplomas and move from the classroom to the newsroom, they will be entering an industry that is experiencing unprecedented change. For example:

* New generations of newsroom computers and increased interest in electronic delivery systems are already changing the way news is packaged and delivered.

* Governments are storing more and more records on computer tapes, changing the way reporters gather the news.

* Newspapers, scrambling to retain loyal readers and attract new ones, are paying more attention to the marketing concept, using packaging and careful story selection to try to keep the newspaper relevant to readers' needs (Corcoran, 1991; Potter, 1992; Reilly, 1991).

The goal of this study is to compare the attitudes of newspaper editors and journalism educators toward a central issue: How should undergraduate news-editorial programs respond to these newspaper industry changes? To determine their attitudes, a questionnaire was mailed to 352 randomly selected newspaper editors and 186 news-editorial professors.

The study builds on the American Society of Newspaper Editors' 1990 survey in which editors gave mixed reviews to journalism schools. This survey goes two steps farther than the ASNE study:

(a) It closely questions editors about whether undergraduate news-editorial curricula should change in light of new technology and changing reader needs, and (b) it compares their views with educators'.

The study confirmed many of ASNE's findings--that editors are skeptical of theory courses, and they believe journalism schools could do a better job of teaching basic skills. But this study also produced some new findings--most notably, that editors, particularly at smaller papers, doubt the value of teaching about new media technologies.

Moreover, this study found clear differences in how editors and educators view the scope of the academic role. Answers to an open-ended question revealed that some editors want journalism schools to concentrate on training students for a newsroom career, but educators believe the academy's role is broader.

The managing editor of a small newspaper in Wisconsin wrote: "Teach kids how to write a 10-word lede. ... Teach them to use 'it' for such things as boards and commissions, etc., and 'theirs' for people. Teach them to stoke the fire in their gut."

Another editor of a small paper recalled his experiences as a journalism student: "Required courses I had to take--mass communications, journalism history--were useless. I would much rather have had a course in interviewing."

But an associate professor in Alabama saw the academic role differently: "We need to train writers, editors to think, write, cover beats--not how to be good newspaper employees."

Another educator put it this way: "Journalism schools are not newspaper schools."

The academy's mission: A delicate balance

If the scholarly and trade literature are any indication, editors and educators have done a great deal of thinking--even soul-searching--in recent years about the mission of journalism education.

Is it better to adopt a career-centered approach, training young journalists in the skills they will need for their first job? Or should journalism be taught on a broader level, emphasizing the news media's role in society rather than the inverted pyramid?

To answer those questions, and evaluate the role of journalism schools in preparing students for careers in a rapidly changing newspaper industry, it is first necessary to examine the mission of higher education in general.

The role of higher education

Individuality vs. community. Boyer (1987), in a study authorized by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, wrote extensively about balancing the needs of career-training and the broader goal of teaching students to think. He identified a fundamental tension between two traditions of baccalaureate education: individuality and community.

The first takes a purely utilitarian view and assumes that the primary purpose of undergraduate education is to train a student for a career. The second goes beyond career-centered interests to

help a student develop an awareness of the human condition, and a sense of his or her role in the world.

The tension between individuality and community figures prominently in journalism education, as editors and educators debate the right mix of practical training, theory, and the liberal arts.

The "minor professions." In exploring journalism education's role in the academy, it is important to note that some of the challenges facing journalism schools are shared by other disciplines. Glazer (1974) listed journalism among the "minor professions" that proliferated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as society's technological and social demands became more complex. Where the academic family of subjects had once included only medicine, law, and the liberal arts, it now embraced a wide array of professions and would-be professions that sought to be legitimized by joining the academy. In addition to journalism, this category included nursing, social work, and education (Clark, 1987).

Glazer identified several sources of tension common to schools of the minor professions. Among them:

1. Scholars and theoreticians teach students who are to become practitioners. In schools of education, for example, psychologists and sociologists teach students who are to become teachers. Glazer noted that such an arrangement inevitably produces conflicts. Students preparing to be teachers know that the psychologists who teach them may never have faced a classroom full of mischievous

fifth-graders.

Numerous studies, including ASNE's, have revealed that a common perception of editors is that journalism faculties are filled with theoreticians and scholars who have had little or no newsroom experience or whose experience is outdated.

2. The body of knowledge considered appropriate for training in the minor professions in changing rapidly. Glazer wrote that syllabi have undergone rapid shifts in schools such as social work and education.

Journalism is another area in which the necessary body of knowledge for a practitioner is changing. However, a review of trade literature shows that editors' perceptions of what journalism schools ought to teach has remained remarkably consistent over time.

What editors want

Two patterns. A review of the scholarly and trade press concerning editors' expectations of journalism schools reveals two broad patterns: (a) Editors stress the need for journalism students to take a wide variety of liberal arts classes so that they can acquire a broad-based education and thus be better journalists, and (b) when it comes to journalism courses, editors stress the practical and tend to dismiss the theoretical.

In one study, editors in Pennsylvania showed strong agreement with educators in a ranking of 35 of the most important skills a newsroom employee should have (Jones, 1978). Both groups ranked clear writing, proper attention to mechanics, and ability to meet

deadlines as first, second, and third, respectively.

Vander Heyden (1987) surveyed 81 news-editorial chairpersons and 100 reporters and editors on the effectiveness of the bachelor's degree in journalism. The results indicated that editors, reporters, and journalism chairpersons agree on the importance of non-journalism courses as part of a journalism student's curriculum. As for the journalism courses, editors called for more skills classes, such as reporting and editing.

The ASNE study. In 1990, the American Society of Newspaper Editors Committee on Education for Journalism asked 600 editors what they thought journalism schools should teach, and asked them to grade the work of journalism schools.

Only 4% of the 381 respondents gave journalism schools an "A" rating on the quality of their training. Most editors, 62%, gave them a "B." A total of 30% gave journalism schools a "C" rating, while 4% gave them a "D."

The editors found the schools weakest in teaching problem solving, copy editing, graphics, and in instilling an understanding of the basic issues of society. Editors gave the schools positive marks in only two areas: teaching news gathering and teaching writing.

Moreover, while 84% of the editors said a college degree was a prerequisite for joining their newsroom, half of the editors said they did not care whether an applicant had a degree in journalism or some other field. (Nonetheless, 68% reported that more than half of their new hires in the past five years were journalism school

graduates.)

As in previous studies, editors in the ASNE study were generally less enthusiastic about journalism courses that are not skills-oriented. Among those more theoretical courses, journalism ethics, media law, and the media's impact on society received top rankings. At the bottom of the list were marketing and audience research, newspaper history and mass communications (American Society of Newspaper Editors Committee on Education for Journalism, 1990).

Many editors say that in order for journalism students to write intelligently about their world, they must be well-grounded in the liberal arts. But when it comes to mass communication history and theory classes that could help a journalism student better understand the mass media's role in society, the editors seem unconvinced. Some educators see a contradiction here.

Educators' views

Unlike editors, who see journalism schools as a place to train professionals, educators appear more tolerant of an approach that combines skills training with a broader, theoretical perspective on the mass media. Their view seems to be: If journalism schools don't teach these theoretical mass communication concepts, who will?

The Oregon Report. The University of Oregon School of Journalism published a report in 1984 that remains one of the most thorough blueprints for change which have come from within journalism schools.

The report emphasized that all media are interrelated and that

the differences between media are blurring as the field becomes more technology-driven. Rather than supporting the training of students for a specific sequence, such as newspapers or broadcasting, the report stressed the need to train students to think creatively in the changing media environment.

The report made three recommendations:

1. Journalism and mass communications programs must move toward a generalized approach that stresses elements common to all media, rather than the rudiments of a particular medium. Students narrowly trained in only one medium could find some of their skills obsolete on graduation day, the report said.

2. Students must receive a broad conceptual map of the field that offers a theoretical base.

3. Students must supplement their broad general knowledge of mass communication with a specific knowledge base in their field of interest (Project on the Future of Journalism and Mass Communication Education, 1984).

The ideas of the Oregon Report haven't gone away. Blanchard (1992) spoke of how Trinity University's Department of Communication has abolished traditional sequences. He criticized what he saw as the common myth that journalism schools exist to "serve narrowly defined industries with cheap labor." Instead, he said, journalism schools should "seek to become the sense-makers of an information society." Students can learn media-specific skills in internship programs, he said.

Meeting modern challenges

While a wealth of literature exists concerning editors' and educators' perceptions of the role of journalism education, comparatively little has been written concerning how journalism schools should respond to the technological and economic challenges the newspaper industry is facing. The Oregon Report and ASNE did touch on these issues to some degree, however.

Technology. The Oregon Report found little sentiment among educators and media practitioners for dramatically overhauling the communications curriculum because of new technology. The consensus seemed to be that learning how to write is more important than learning how to use a computer.

The report did make five recommedations concerning how journalism schools can respond to technological developments: (a) develop a media laboratory, the size of which would depend on the school's budget, (b) develop conceptual courses that address the history, systems, and culture of technology, (c) provide computer training, (d) foster an understanding of technology design and capacities, and (e) promote communication studies through research that yields insights for other disciplines (Project on the Future of Journalism and Mass Communication Education, 1984).

The ASNE survey asked editors to rate the relative importance of nine conceptual courses. The respondents rated a technology course sixth in importance. Only three categories--marketing and audience research, newspaper history and mass communications--received lower ratings (American Society of Newspaper Editors

Committee on Education for Journalism, 1990).

Economic challenges. Here the central question is: Can journalism schools help newspapers reverse declining market penetration by teaching management and media economics to students? The question is not often asked.

Some studies have indicated that editors want journalism schools to teach more about newspaper management. Graduates' ignorance of how the newspaper operates was the second-biggest complaint of editors in one survey (Mills et. al, 1980).

The ASNE survey asked how editors perceived the importance of teaching newspaper management. Editors ranked the subject fourth on a list of nine conceptual courses. Newspaper economics was fifth, and marketing and audience research was seventh.

By comparison, editors thought journalism ethics, media law, and the media's impact on society were all more important than any of the management courses. Editors still thought management courses more important than journalism history or mass communications, however. They ranked those two subjects at the bottom of the list of nine courses in order of importance.

Against this backdrop, the present study sought to further measure the attitudes of editors and educators toward the teaching of technology and marketing--as well as measuring their attitudes once more on older issues such as the theory-vs.-practical-training debate.

Method

A questionnaire was sent in March 1992 to 352 randomly selected editors and 186 news-editorial professors. The questionnaires sent to the editors and the educators were identical, except that the demographic questions differed. A copy of the questionnaire appears as the Appendix to this paper.

Questionnaire design and pretest

Section 1: A rating of skills. The newspaper editors and news-editorial professors were given a list of 16 journalistic skills, with instructions to rate them according to their importance for a student preparing for a job as a reporter. They did this by rating the skills on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very unimportant and 5 being very important.

An earlier idea to have survey respondents rank the 16 skills in order of importance was dropped because it was judged that it would be too difficult and too time-consuming for the respondents, and therefore would result in a lower response rate.

Section 2: A rating of concepts. The design of this section was similar to that of Section 1. In this case, the editors and educators rated concepts, rather than skills.

Section 3: Response to statements. The questionnaire asked editors and educators to respond to 16 statements about journalism education, rating them on a 5-point Likert scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The statements were adapted from articles in scholarly journals and the trade press.

Section 4: A categorization of skills. This section listed

nine areas of knowledge that are becoming increasingly important for newspaper journalists. Among them were ability to suggest and create charts and graphics, and knowing how to use an electronic morgue or database. The questionnaire then asked recipients to select which of those areas of knowledge they wanted journalism schools to shift more resources toward, and which areas they would prefer to let young journalists learn on the job. An open-ended question followed.

Sample selection

Editors. After a pretest, an initial sample of 292 editors was chosen randomly from a database maintained by New Directions for News, a newspaper think tank at the University of Missouri.

A purposive supplement was then chosen, to ensure that small, medium-sized, and large newspapers were adequately represented. Small newspapers were defined as those with circulations under 50,000, medium-sized newspapers as those with circulations of 50,000 to 149,999, and large newspapers as those with circulations of 150,000 and over. Twenty newspapers from each category were selected randomly from the New Directions for News database and from the 1991 Editor & Publisher International Year Book. That brought the total sample of editors to 352.

Educators. The survey was mailed to professors who supervise sequences geared to undergraduates preparing for newspaper careers. The survey was limited to undergraduate degree-granting schools that hold membership in the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Statistical analysis

Sections 1 and 2. The responses to these sections were analyzed in three ways:

1. The frequencies for each skill or concept were calculated to determine how the respondents rated them. They show how many respondents assigned each skill a "very important" rating, how many assigned it an "important" rating, and so on.

2. The mean scores for each skill or concept were calculated to determine the skill's relative importance in the eyes of editors and educators. For example, in the case of media law, editors assigned it a mean score of 3.877 on the five-point scale of importance, while educators assigned it a mean score of 4.246. The mean scores for each group were then ranked, and the rankings compared. The mean score for media law, for instance, meant that concept ranked fifth on the educators' list of important concepts to teach, but it ranked sixth on the editors' list.

The two lists were compared using a Spearman's rho nonparametric correlation test (Williams, 1986; Stempel and Westley, 1989; McClave and Benson, 1988).

3. Further tests were done to see if rankings of editors and educators on individual items differed significantly, and whether their responses varied according to circulation of newspaper, size of journalism school, and so on. This was done using a crosstabular analysis and chi-square test (Williams, 1986).

To accommodate the crosstabular tables, the variables were consolidated and recoded. "Very unimportant" and "unimportant" were

consolidated as "unimportant," and "somewhat important, important, and very important" were consolidated as "important."

This analysis revealed, for example, that a high percentage of editors considered "using government computer tapes to gather news" an important skill, but that an even higher percentage of educators considered the skill important. A chi-square test showed the difference to be statistically significant.

Section 3. Here again, the variables were consolidated and recoded for analysis. "Strongly disagree" and "disagree" were recoded as "disagree," "neutral" continued to be categorized as "neutral," and "agree" and "strongly agree" were recoded as "agree." Crosstabulation and chi-square tests were then conducted to determine whether editors and educators reacted in a significantly different way to the statements (Williams, 1986).

Further crosstabular calculations and chi-square tests were conducted to determine if the respondents' gender, size of journalism school, highest academic degree, circulation of newspaper, or other factors affected the results.

Section 4. For each of the skills and concepts listed in Section 4, a score was calculated based on the number of "votes" the skill or concept received. Those scores were then expressed as a percentage of the total number of respondents, and the percentages for editors and educators compared. Appropriate crosstabular analysis and chi-square tests were then conducted (Williams, 1986). Responses to the open-ended question were analyzed in a qualitative, rather than a quantitative manner.

Results

A total of 266 of the 538 questionnaires were returned, for an overall response rate of 49.4%. Of the 352 sent to editors, 148 were returned, for a response rate among the editors of 42%. Of the 186 sent to educators, 118 were returned, for a response rate among the educators of 63.4%.

Profile of respondents

The editors. All but one of the editors specified whether they were male or female. Of the 147 responding, 110, or 74.8%, were male, and 37, or 25.2%, were female.

Of the 145 who listed their newspaper's circulation, 61.4% were from papers with a circulation of less than 50,000, 24.8% were from papers with between 50,000 and 149,999 circulation, and 13.8% were from papers with a circulation of 150,000 or more.

The editors were also asked to estimate what percentage of their newsroom staff members held journalism degrees. The average response was 66%. All but 10 editors responded to the question.

The educators. All but two of the responding educators specified their gender. Of those, 81% were male, and 19% were female.

All but one specified their size of their journalism school or department. A total of 69.2% were employed at journalism schools with enrollments of less than 500, while 20.5% worked in medium-sized schools, with enrollments of 500 to 999, and 10.3% worked in schools with enrollments of 1,000 or more.

Just over half of the respondents held doctorates. Of the 116

answering the question, 51.7% held Ph.Ds, 31% said their highest degree was a master's, and 14.7% said their highest was a bachelor's. A total of 2.6% had partially fulfilled the requirements for a Ph.D.

The respondents also were asked to estimate the percentage of students in their journalism schools who plan careers in newspapers. The mean response was 29.8%.

Breakdown of responses

General patterns. In their responses, editors and educators agreed on two major points: Journalism schools ought to teach students to write, and they ought to teach students to think.

Beyond that, there was little agreement. Wide differences of opinion emerged over how those goals should be achieved, and whether they should be broadened in light of new developments in technology, demographics, and the marketplace.

The study's most surprising finding was that editors, particularly at smaller papers, tended to be skeptical about the teaching of new technology. They were far less willing than educators to expand journalism curricula to include instruction in electronic databases and using government computer tapes to gather news. A major reason was that they didn't believe journalism schools could keep pace with technology--a comment echoed by many of the educators. But the educators were willing to see journalism schools as a laboratory of ideas, where theory could point the way to a better understanding of the news media's role in an ever-changing technological environment.

As in previous studies, editors stressed the need for practical training. In fact, some of the editors' responses implied that one reason they don't want technology added to the curriculum is that they think journalism schools first need to do a better job of teaching "the basics."

Though editors didn't want journalism education to change in response to technology, some of them did urge some change in response to the marketplace. At a time when newspapers face declining market penetration, many editors said students should learn to think of a newspaper as a product that must be marketed to its audience. Educators were more reluctant in that regard.

Finally, there were some philosophical differences regarding journalism schools' relationship to the newspaper industry. Some of the editors' comments implied that journalism schools' first duty is to train journalists. But educators saw a broader role for journalism schools, contending that students must learn to think critically about the news media's role in society.

Ranking of skills. The editors and educators held similar views on the importance of the 16 skills listed in Part One, with only a few areas of slight disagreement. A Spearman's rho analysis shows the similarity to be significant.

Based on the mean scores given to each skill, both groups believed writing readable, accurate copy is the most important skill that journalism educators should teach. At the bottom of both lists was shorthand. Table 1, which follows the Appendix to this paper, compares how each group rated the importance of the various

skills for a student learning to be an entry-level reporter. The comparison is based on a ranking of mean scores given to each item.

Ranking of concepts. Part Two asked the respondents to rate the importance of teaching various concepts. As with Part One, there was little variation in the way the two groups ranked the items. A Spearman's rho analysis shows a high positive correlation between the two groups' responses. See Table 2.

Both groups placed ability to think critically at the top of the list and mass communication theory at the bottom. They stressed that if a journalist can't think critically, all other skills and concepts are worthless.

The editor of a small newspaper in Ohio wrote:

> Two of the biggest problems I face in hiring fresh J-grads are their inability to think critically and their inability to recognize trends in their coverage areas. ... They can't seem to put together the thought that Fact A, Fact B and Fact C are related and thus, we have what appears to be a new trend.

The managing editor a small paper in Minnesota thought it important that students learn to question conventional wisdom. She wrote: "College should encourage them to break traditions, not follow formulas."

Views on technology. The educators, in general, were more receptive than editors to the idea of revising news-editorial curricula to reflect technological trends.

For example, in Part One of the questionnaire, 93.1% of educators thought teaching the use of electronic morgues and databases was important, compared with 78.4% of the editors. As for using government computer tapes as a news-gathering tool, 91.5% of the educators thought that an important skill to teach, compared with 69.6% of the editors.

The survey yielded similar results for two other technology-related skills: creating graphics on a computer, and survey and polling techniques. See Tables 3 through 6.

An editor of a small newspaper wrote: "Forget technology. Teach them the basics of being a reporter. If you do that, everything else will be easy. If they cannot write, spell, or see a story, they are worthless."

From an editor in Utah: "The newspaper industry lacks good storytellers and creativity. Journalism schools worry too much about keeping up technologically, and not enough about basic good writing. ..."

Another editor at a small paper wrote: "Technology is changing our products but not our mission. It will continue to be communication of essential information."

Several of the educators wrote, however, that journalism schools should keep pace with technological change.

A professor in California urged: "Prepare students to use new forms of technology that increase research capacity, improve design of publications, and expand the number of journalism mediums that will be available."

Not all educators were convinced, however. Some said journalism schools shouldn't waste time trying to keep up technologically when they lack the resources to do so.

A professor at a medium-sized journalism department was pragmatic: "Money prevents state-of-the-art. Technology changes. Theory doesn't."

An assistant professor in Texas wrote:

> We were all so proud when we got our first generation of computers in copy editing lab--until an editor told me one day, "Hell, I can teach 'em to run a computer in 30 minutes--you teach 'em to write." I think that philosophy will always be basic to journalism education.

Further analysis found significant variations in the way editors of small, medium and large papers viewed the teaching of survey and polling techniques, and using government computer tapes. Editors of large papers were much more receptive to the idea of having those skills taught in journalism schools. See Tables 7 and 8.

In Part Four of the questionnaire, editors and educators were asked whether they favored shifting some journalism school resources toward the teaching of various technology-related skills. Here again, there were striking differences between editors' and educators' views, and also among editors of small, medium and large papers. See Tables 9 and 10.

The marketing concept. Editors in the survey were more willing than educators to revise news-editorial curricula to reflect the marketing concept.

In Part Three of the questionnaire, editors and educators were asked to agree or disagree with the statement, "Students ought to learn to think of the newspaper as a product to be marketed to its audience." Nearly three out of four of the editors agreed with this statement, but fewer than half of the educators did. See Table 11.

There were strong opinions on both sides of this issue. Many editors stressed that students should learn to write for their readers, rather than for other journalists, and they said journalism schools should join the industry in seeking solutions to declining market penetration. Others--both editors and educators--showed disdain for the idea of marketing the newspaper, and said journalism schools must stress the basics.

The executive editor of a medium-sized newspaper in Texas wrote:

> Journalism students, as well as many journalists, do not understand the importance of maintaining a financially strong newspaper. They also fail to understand what role they play in that picture.
>
> Producing a newspaper that people want to read affects individuals in a number of ways ... suggesting graphics, understanding management, and understanding that the culture

> and ethnicity of their market is unique to that market--it changes from city to city, newspaper to newspaper.

The managing editor of a medium-sized paper in Ohio wrote that students should be told:

> Never, ever lose sight of the fact that we are a service industry. You are a public servant the same as the advertising salesman or the circulation district manager. What the reader deems important may be diametrically opposite to that which you hold dear as a reporter or editor.

But several other editors and educators argued with equal vigor that journalism schools must shun market fads and stress the basics. The chairperson of a small journalism department in Michigan, who has 30 years of newsroom experience, wrote:

> Many newspaper changes are being market-driven and will fail. J-schools should avoid going down that road. News and information that is necessary to people are still the most important functions of newspapers.

The staff development director at a large newspaper in the South wrote: "Newspapers may be changing, but journalism schools must still stick to the basics, and teach the basics better."

Editors and educators were also asked to respond to this statement: As newspapers create non-traditional beats, such as

"ethics" and "the workplace," journalism schools should help generate such ideas.

A majority of editors and educators agreed with this statement, but educators were more receptive to it. See Table 12.

The editor of a small paper in Pennsylvania wrote that journalism schools are overlooking opportunities to come up with new ideas that could help the industry:

> Journalism schools are too defensive, as certain parts of this questionnaire suggest. The debate too often gets bogged down in grammar and spelling. We've entered a post-literate society: Nobody can spell, nobody can write; blaming this on journalism schools prevents them from getting on to things they probably could do better--i.e., resolving big-picture problems. Can journalism schools play leadership roles in raising editorial pay scales, expanding sunshine laws in their home states? Can journalism deans/profs be the industry's statesmen? Why not?

The inverted pyramid. Many of the respondents stressed the need for creativity and renewed attention to good writing to help newspapers win back readers. But there was no clear consensus on whether journalism schools should de-emphasize the inverted pyramid approach to news writing.

The educators were spread fairly evenly across the spectrum,

with 35.7% agreeing with the statement, 32.2% neutral, and 32.2% disagreeing. Among the editors, 31.3% agreed, 25.2% were neutral, and 43.5% disagreed. A chi-square analysis showed that the editors and educators did not significantly differ on this issue.

The open-ended responses revealed, however, that some of those who did favor de-emphasizing the inverted pyramid felt quite strongly about it. The editor of a large newspaper wrote: "The worst fault of J-schools is that they teach one-model journalism, as if there weren't thousands of ways of doing this thing."

An instructor in Florida said journalism schools ought to shun "all the mind-crushing conventions and rule-bound routines such as AP style and stupid story formulas." He added: "Let's shoot all the textbook writers: Their main purpose is to make every J-prof appear competent, and their main effect is to kill the soul."

Summary and conclusions

The scope of the academic role. Editors and educators agreed that good writing and critical thinking were the most important skills a newspaper-bound student should learn. In choosing these skills, the respondents appeared to ratify Boyer's two-tiered vision of higher education: preparing students for a career as well as educating them more broadly about their role in society.

In that context, it is somewhat surprising that editors have traditionally doubted the value of theoretical courses. Editors clearly value critical-thinking skills but, paradoxically, they shun theoretical courses that could help students develop those

skills. Many of the respondents noted the newspaper industry's need for new ideas--and those new ideas will come from journalism schools only if schools continue to move beyond training newspaper employees and toward training students to think critically about their chosen profession.

The teaching of technology. Editors responding to this study's questionnaire cited two reasons, more than any others, for their skepticism toward the teaching of technology in journalism schools: They didn't want to de-emphasize basic writing skills, and they didn't believe journalism schools had the resources to keep up with technological change.

As to the first objection, Boyer's model implies that journalism education must go beyond teaching students to write, if it is to transcend the trade-school function. Further, since virtually everyone in a typical newsroom uses a computer, it is clear that competence in electronic morgue searches and word processing is as much a basic skill as learning proofreader's marks was a generation ago.

Another technology-related skill that is becoming a necessary basic skill is knowledge of statistics. Editors and educators ranked survey and polling techniques far down on their list of desirable skills for journalism students (see Table 1), but clearly such skills are becoming more important for journalists. Nearly every day some journalists incorporate statistics into their work, and nearly every day some journalists get it wrong. Journalism schools can help by seeing that their students are trained in these

techniques--either in journalism schools or other departments.

Editors' second objection carries some truth: Journalism schools do indeed lack the resources to keep up with the latest technology. But that doesn't mean they can ignore it. The ACEJMC accreditation standards mandate that students be trained in the "basic equipment" they will need on the job. Word-processing computers and electronic morgues now fall in this category as much as typewriters once did.

The good news for resource-strapped journalism schools is that most students now have some word-processing experience before they arrive in journalism school, and a great many will also be familiar with electronic databases. This is one area in which journalism schools can work closely with other academic departments, as several survey respondents suggested, to make sure students learn the skills they need.

Schools that lack sophisticated software and hardware can still play an important role--through theory. These are the schools that can study big-picture issues such as the implications of the electronic town hall and the customized electronic newspaper. This fits in with several respondents' idea that journalism schools ought to watch the watchdogs.

The marketing concept. Educators tended to shun the idea of journalism schools teaching about newspapers as products to be marketed. But editors clearly see newspapers in that way, and students should be exposed to that notion, since they will be confronted with it upon graduation. Part of the marketing concept

involves looking for creative ideas--and those ideas, including alternatives to the inverted pyramid, can come from journalism schools, as several editors and educators suggested.

Conclusion. With the media environment changing faster than ever before, it seems fitting to build bridges between journalism schools and newspapers. The industry needs answers and talent, and the academy can provide both.

But to do so, the academy must do a better job of promoting itself among editors as a laboratory of new ideas. Only then will editors start to see the academy not only as a place to teach rudimentary skills, but also as a place that anticipates technological and marketplace change, and where big-picture questions are raised and answered.

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Confidential

APPENDIX

Dear participant:

Thank you for being a part of this study of journalism education. Please answer the following questions as completely as you can. Your answers will be anonymous and confidential.

If you have any questions, please contact project coordinator John Arwood at (314) 882-2183 or (314) 446-0529. Call collect if you wish. Your opinions are important. Thank you for your help.

If you would like a summary of the results of this study, please include just your address:

_____

_____

_____

This section asks you to rate the importance of various skills for a student learning to be a reporter. Please rate the following skills on a scale of 1 to 5, according to their importance in an ideal newspaper journalism curriculum. Then, go back and select the three most important. Place a letter A in the blank to the left of the most important skill, a B next to the second most-important skill, and a C next to the third most-important skill.

Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important
1	2	3	4	5

	Very Unimportant				Very Important
____ Copy editing	1	2	3	4	5
____ Creating graphics on a computer	1	2	3	4	5
____ Grammar, punctuation, usage	1	2	3	4	5
____ Headline writing	1	2	3	4	5
____ Interviewing	1	2	3	4	5
____ Meeting deadlines	1	2	3	4	5
____ Note-taking skills other than shorthand	1	2	3	4	5
____ Operating a camera	1	2	3	4	5
____ Page design	1	2	3	4	5
____ Shorthand	1	2	3	4	5
____ Survey and polling techniques	1	2	3	4	5
____ Using computerized morgues and databases	1	2	3	4	5
____ Using government computer tapes to gather news	1	2	3	4	5
____ Using a newsroom computer	1	2	3	4	5
____ Using printed documents to gather news	1	2	3	4	5
____ Writing readable, accurate copy	1	2	3	4	5

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This section asks you to evaluate the importance of various concepts for a student learning to be a reporter. As you did with the skills, please rate these concepts on a scale of 1 to 5 according to their importance in an ideal journalism curriculum. Then, go back and select the three most important. Place a letter A in the blank to the left of the most important concept, a B next to the second most important, and a C next to the third most important.

Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important
1	2	3	4	5

	Very Unimportant				Very Important
____ Ability to think critically	1	2	3	4	5
____ Awareness of other cultures and ethnic groups	1	2	3	4	5
____ Knowing how to develop sources on a beat	1	2	3	4	5
____ Mass communication theory	1	2	3	4	5
____ Media ethics	1	2	3	4	5
____ Media history	1	2	3	4	5
____ Media law	1	2	3	4	5
____ Media management and economics	1	2	3	4	5
____ Understanding importance of graphics, photos	1	2	3	4	5
____ Understanding power structures in a community	1	2	3	4	5
____ Understanding recent readership trends	1	2	3	4	5

The following statements were gleaned from interviews with newspaper editors, publishers, and journalism professors, and from articles in scholarly journals and the trade press. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement.

Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

	Strongly Disagree				**Strongly Agree**
1. Journalism schools ought to do a better job of weeding out students who can't write.	1	2	3	4	5

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	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
2. The main reason fewer students are planning a career in newspapers is that newspapers don't pay enough.	1	2	3	4	5
3. One mark of a good journalism school is a large proportion of Ph Ds on the faculty.	1	2	3	4	5
4. A liberal arts degree can prepare a student for a newspaper career just as well as a journalism degree can.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Databases and government computer tapes will radically change the news-gathering process, and journalism schools should help prepare students for the change.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Journalism schools spend too much time teaching mass communication theory, and not enough time teaching the basics of writing, editing and interviewing.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Students ought to learn to think of the newspaper as a product that must be marketed to its audience.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Students should learn to suggest ideas for charts, graphics, photographs and other visual elements to accompany their stories.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Journalism schools should prepare their students for a future that is sure to include electronic delivery systems such as videotex and teletext.	1	2	3	4	5
10. As newspapers create non-traditional beats, such as "ethics" and "the workplace," journalism schools should help generate such ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Journalism schools need to de-emphasize the "inverted pyramid" approach to news writing.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Too much of the scholarly research done in journalism schools is of little benefit to the newspaper industry.	1	2	3	4	5
13. By toughening their entrance requirements, journalism schools may be weeding out students who contribute some ethnic and cultural diversity.	1	2	3	4	5
14. In addition to the basics, undergraduate journalism students should learn terms such as "market penetration" and "circulation churn."	1	2	3	4	5
15. Many journalism schools are out of touch with the rapid changes in the newspaper industry.	1	2	3	4	5
16. One mark of a good journalism school is a large proportion of newsroom veterans on the faculty.	1	2	3	4	5

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This section asks what you would like young journalists to learn in journalism schools and what you would prefer to let them learn on the job.

1. With newspapers trying new approaches to cope with changing technologies and changing readership needs, which, if any, of the following should journalism curricula shift more resources toward? Check as many as apply.

_____ Awareness of videotex, teletext

_____ Using an electronic morgue or database

_____ Developing sources on a beat

_____ Awareness of other cultures and ethnic groups

_____ Ability to suggest and create charts and graphics

_____ Survey and polling techniques

_____ Using computer tapes to gather news

_____ Media management and economics

_____ Understanding recent readership trends

_____ Other (please specify below)

2. Which, if any, of the following would you prefer to let young journalists learn on the job, and not in journalism school? Check as many as apply.

_____ Awareness of videotex, teletext

_____ Using an electronic morgue or database

_____ Developing sources on a beat

_____ Awareness of other cultures and ethnic groups

_____ Ability to suggest and create charts and graphics

_____ Survey and polling techniques

_____ Using computer tapes to gather news

_____ Media management and economics

_____ Understanding recent readership trends

_____ Other (please specify below)

3. In the space below, please write any additional comments concerning your views on the role of journalism schools in a time of rapid change for newspapers. Use another sheet if necessary.

What is your gender? ___ M ___ F What is your title? _____

What is the circulation of your newspaper? _____

What is your highest academic degree? _____ In what field? _____

Approximately what percentage of your newsroom staffers hold journalism degrees? _____

Thank you for your cooperation

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

This section asks what you would like young journalists to learn in journalism schools and what you would prefer to let them learn on the job.

1. With newspapers trying new approaches to cope with changing technologies and changing readership needs, which, if any, of the following should journalism curricula shift more resources toward? Check as many as apply.

____ Awareness of videotex, teletext

____ Using an electronic morgue or database

____ Developing sources on a beat

____ Awareness of other cultures and ethnic groups

____ Ability to suggest and create charts and graphics

____ Survey and polling techniques

____ Using computer tapes to gather news

____ Media management and economics

____ Understanding recent readership trends

____ Other (please specify below)

2. Which, if any, of the following would you prefer to let young journalists learn on the job, and not in journalism school? Check as many as apply.

____ Awareness of videotex, teletext

____ Using an electronic morgue or database

____ Developing sources on a beat

____ Awareness of other cultures and ethnic groups

____ Ability to suggest and create charts and graphics

____ Survey and polling techniques

____ Using computer tapes to gather news

____ Media management and economics

____ Understanding recent readership trends

____ Other (please specify below)

3. In the space below, please write any additional comments concerning your views on the role of journalism schools in a time of rapid change for newspapers. Use another sheet if necessary.

What is your gender? ___ M ___ F What is your title? _____

What is the enrollment of your journalism school? _____

Approximately what percentage of those students are preparing for careers in newspapers? _____

What is your highest academic degree? _____ In what field? _____

How many years of newsroom experience do you have? _____

Thank you for your cooperation

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Table 1

How editors and educators ranked importance of basic skills

SKILL	Editors' Ranking	Educators' Ranking
Writing readable, accurate copy	1	1
Grammar, punctuation, usage	2	2
Interviewing	3	3
Meeting deadlines	4	4
Copy editing	5	7
Using a newsroom computer	6	5
Using printed documents	7	6
Note-taking other than shorthand	8	9
Using computerized databases	9	8
Headline writing	10	12
Using government computer tapes	11	10
Operating a camera	12	15
Survey and polling techniques	13	11
Page design	14	14
Creating graphics on a computer	15	13
Shorthand	16	16

Spearman's rho = 0.9559

($p < .05$)

Table 2

How editors and educators ranked importance of various concepts

CONCEPT	Editors' Ranking	Educators' Ranking
Ability to think critically	1	1
Developing sources on a beat	2	3
Media ethics	3	2
Awareness of other cultures	4	6
Understanding power in a community	5	4
Media law	6	5
Understanding readership trends	7	7
Knowing importance of graphics, photos	8	8
Media management and economics	9	10
Media history	10	9
Mass communication theory	11	11

Spearman's rho = .9545

($p < .05$)

How editors and educators viewed the teaching of technology

Table 3

Creating graphics on a computer

	Editors	Educators	
Unimportant	46.2%	31%	
Important	53.8%	69%	$p < .05$

Table 4

Survey and polling techniques

	Editors	Educators	
Unimportant	45.9%	13.7%	
Important	54.1%	86.3%	$p < .05$

Table 5

Using electronic morgues and databases

	Editors	Educators	
Unimportant	21.6%	6.9%	
Important	78.4%	93.1%	$p < .05$

Table 6

Using government computer tapes to gather news

	Editors	Educators	
Unimportant	30.4%	8.5%	
Important	69.6%	91.5%	$p < .05$

Table 7

Survey and polling techniques

	Small Papers	Medium Papers	Large Papers	
Unimportant	56.8%	33.3%	25%	
Important	43.2%	66.7%	75%	$p < .05$

Table 8

Using government computer tapes to gather news

	Small Papers	Medium Papers	Large Papers	
Unimportant	45.5%	8.3%	5%	
Important	54.5%	91.7%	95%	$p < .05$

Table 9

Attitudes toward shifting journalism school resources to the teaching of electronic morgues and databases

	Editors	Educators	
Against	54.4%	18.6%	
Favor	45.6%	81.4%	$p < .05$

Table 10

Editors' attitudes toward shifting journalism school resources to the teaching of electronic morgues and databases, by size of newspaper

	Small Papers	Medium Papers	Large Papers	
Against	62.9%	47.2%	25%	
Favor	37.1%	52.8%	75%	$p < .05$

Table 11

Attitudes toward teaching about newspapers as products to be marketed to their audience

	Editors	Educators	
Disagree	12.8%	20.3%	
Neutral	16.2%	33.1%	
Agree	70.9%	46.6%	$p < .05$

Table 12

Attitudes toward having journalism schools originate ideas for non-traditional beats

	Editors	Educators	
Disagree	10.9%	4.3%	
Neutral	29.3%	17.9%	
Agree	59.9%	77.8%	$p < .05$